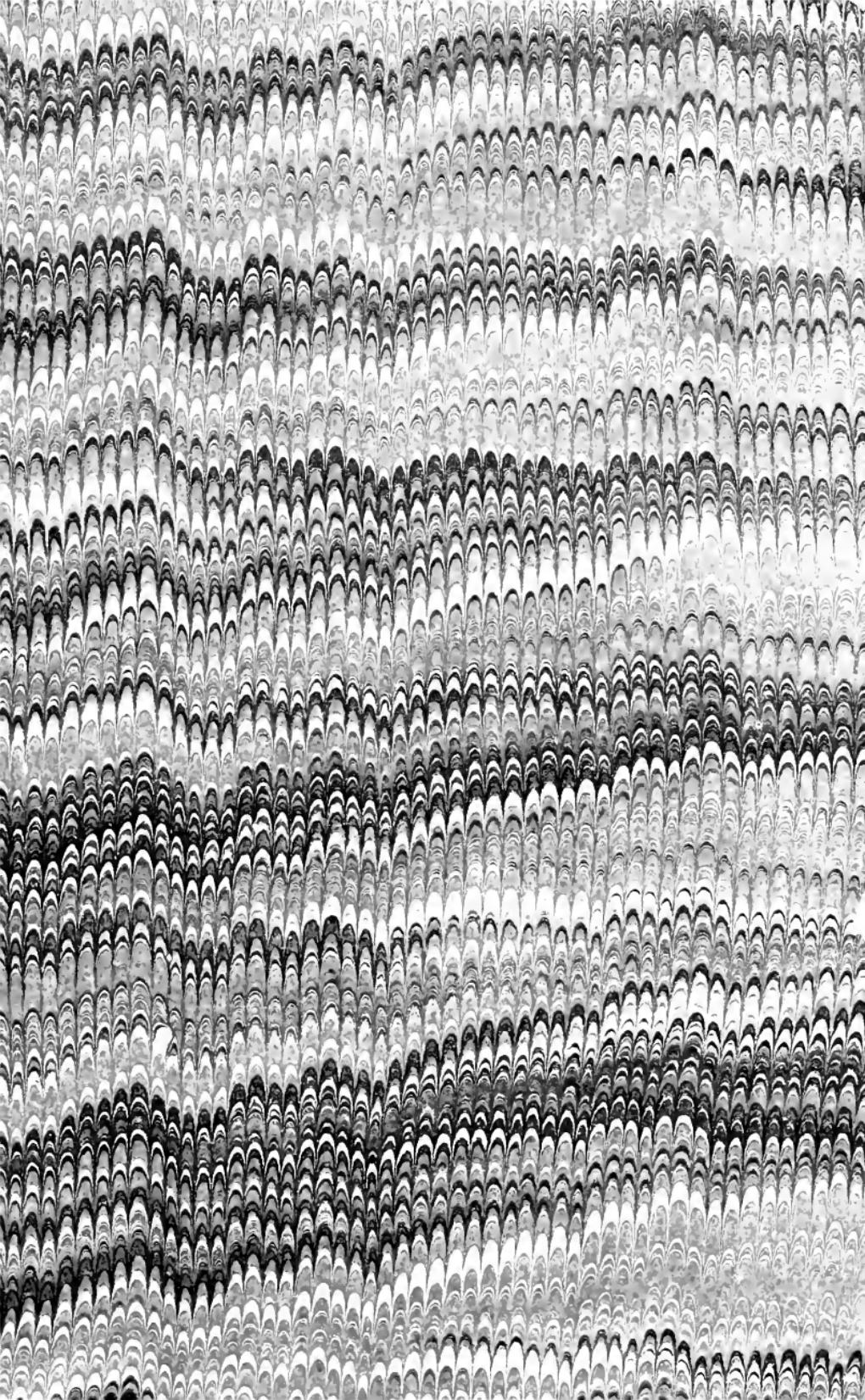


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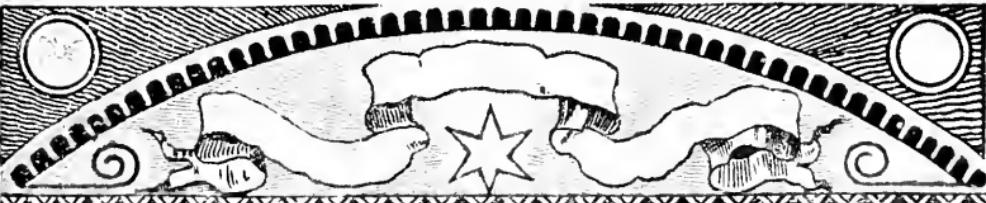
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HOUSE-KEEPING AND HOME-MAKING

BY

MARION HARLAND

AUTHOR OF

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See page xii. and xiv. for Introduction and Contents of this book.

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V

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Brenton O.
July 18th 1882

Dear Sirs

I did not have time
to read carefully "One's Daughters";
but I did look far enough
to feel that Marion Harland
had given expression to many
and valuable truths. I do
not feel prepared to add
any commendation of a
book that violently so well
recommends itself.

Very Truly Yours
Lucetia L. Garfield

HOUSEKEEPING

AND

HOME-MAKING,

WITH CHAPTERS ON

DRESS AND GOSSIP.

BY

MARION HARLAND.

TAKEN FROM HER LATEST WORK,

"EVE'S DAUGHTERS"; OR, COMMON SENSE FOR MAID,
WIFE AND MOTHER.



NEW YORK:
JOHN W. LOVELL COMPANY.

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HOUSEKEEPING AND HOME-MAKING

WITH

CHAPTERS ON DRESS AND GOSSIP.

"The making of a true home is really our peculiar and inalienable right—a right which no man can take from us;—for a man can no more make a home than a drone can make a hive."
—FRANCES POWER COBBE, "*Duties of Women.*"

ABOUT once in every lustrum the press of the country breaks out in active warfare on the vexed question of woman's work and woman's wages. The paper cannonade is carried on for some time between those who represent the employers, and the larger party who uphold the rights of the employed ; a multitude of foolish and some good things being said on both sides ; then mutters itself into silence like any other harmless sort of thun-

der. Nobody is convinced and nobody hurt, excepting the novices among workwomen who have not yet learned that detonation is not reform, nor, of necessity, germane to it.

Among things worthy of record that grew out of such a sham-fight about fourteen years since, was a brief, strong reply penned by Madame Demorest, the celebrated modiste and fashionist of New York, to the inquiry why so few women attain to complete mastery of any craft.

“Because,” wrote Madame (I quote from memory), “not one in ten thousand expects to make this or that trade the business of her life. It is something by which she hopes to earn bread and clothes until she gets married. Being perpetually on the outlook for the fortunate chance that is to relieve her from the necessity of paid labor, she is content to learn just as little as will suffice to keep her in her situation. The man, who knows that he is fitting himself for a call-

ing he will relinquish only with existence, makes it a part of himself, and himself a part of it."

Everybody professed to be satisfied with this solution, which was indubitably true and altogether pertinent, viewing the problem from Madame's standpoint. We understood, or thought we did, why those of our young women who are forced to maintain themselves are content with mediocrity in vocations that are but makeshifts at the best, and why those of us for whom they condescend to work while they are on their promotion consent to accept the results of "journey" labor.

Madame Demorest has, perhaps, accounted for the fact that there are so few *artistes* in the United States. Who will explain the fact, yet more patent, of the growing neglect of practical housewifery on the part of young women whose hope and expectation are to possess and take care of houses of their own at some—perchance very early—day? That

they are thus indifferent is no haphazard assertion.

I do not forget that cookery is taking its place as a fine-art in our land, and is, therefore, patronized by our "best circles." I have seen the artistically business-like blank books open upon silken laps and rich fur muffs, diamonded fingers flying over them in the eager effort to preserve the directions of Signor Blot and Miss Parloa, during their "fascinating" illustrated lectures. I enjoy —nobody more—the fun of salad-clubs and cooking-circles, especially the "high teas" to which the intimate friends of the fair *cuisinières* are bidden to partake of dishes prepared "exclusively" by themselves.

I recall one which was conducted upon strictly conscientious principles, that began with raw oysters and wound up with confectioner's ices.

"But indeed we got up everything else!" cried a candid member, when rallied upon the inconsistency. "That is, of course,

Mamma's cook made the coffee and broiled the chops, and the Vienna rolls *had* to be bought, you know!"

We recollect that Marie Antoinette made rolls of butter on marble shelves from cream skimmed with golden ladles, and smile indulgence of girlish freaks. Playing at cooking is less hurtful than the "German," and less exciting than the whist-table. The graceful game does not blind the watchful student of their "tricks and manners" to "our girls'" general ignorance of domestic economy, their utter inability to enter, with credit to us or to themselves, upon the practical business of housewifery next week or next month.

I believe, fully and sorrowfully, that in this incompetency lies part of the secret of the early fading and invalidism of so many of our young wives. Our grandmothers did their own housework, often including washing, ironing, spinning, and weaving; bore many children, and lived and died in general

ignorance of the rules of hygiene and orthography. Then ran like wild-fire over the country the craze of "women's higher education," and piano-forte makers and physicians grew rich. The women who were girls thirty years ago knew little enough of household management when they were married. They have, as a whole, seen to it that their daughters shall know less.

To exemplify the universality of this remissness, take two instances from widely-separated spheres of thought, action, and social position.

"I was the eldest of a large family," said the wife of a millionaire. "My mother was delicate, we were not wealthy, and much of the responsibility of the care of house and children devolved upon me. I pity myself as I look back upon my burdened girlhood, although I did not then appreciate the injustice done to me. My daughters shall not be prematurely careworn if I can help it."

In pursuance of this humane policy, she

has fitted them to become the accomplished wives of men not less affluent than their father, provided they can always secure the services of housekeepers and an able corps of servants to assist them in bearing the responsibility.

The second mother to whom I shall refer is as loving and Ruthful for her offspring as the rich man's wife, although only the help-meet of a small New England farmer. She has two daughters—buxom damsels—fifteen and seventeen years old; yet chancing to have business at the farm a few summers since, I found her pale and tremulous from a spell of fever, churning several gallons of milk, pausing every few minutes to recover breath and strength.

“Surely you are unfit for that!” said I, compassionately. “Cannot your girls do it?”

“I don't think such hard labor is good for growing girls,” she answered, the poor wan face softening as she went on. “I have had

to work so hard all my days that I can't bear to set them at it."

"But if they marry," I suggested.

She sighed. "Ah! then they will be obligeed to come to it. There's all the more reason, you see, ma'am, why I should spare them while I can."

In the half day I spent with her I saw her knead the bread and get the dinner ready, thanking, with gratitude pitiable to behold, one daughter who picked up and brought in a basket of chips, and the other who ungraciously laid by a hat she was trimming for herself, to set the table.

"I'm obligeed to call on the poor children to do so many things that it's a wonder they don't get clean out of patience and run away from home," she observed in their hearing. "My sickness has been an awful cross to them."

The girls' faces said that she had not overstated the case.

The elder spoke out pertly :

"She hasn't been able to fetch in a stick of wood for over a month. Indeed, she's been ailing pretty much all the time since she had the fever first—a year ago in August."

"Yet," I answered, "she has done all the cooking, churning, bread and butter making, the family sewing, cleans windows and paint, makes the beds, sweeps and dusts, and fills up the crannies of leisure left from all this by taking in plain sewing and knitting. I do not think a healthy woman could do more."

The girl bridled at my tone.

"I am sure we just wear ourselves out helping mother!" she retorted. "I'm tired all the time, and half of my own work goes undone."

I heard an echo of her lament uttered in more refined accents not many days ago.

"I don't complain of the sacrifice of my time and pursuits," murmured an affectionate daughter. "I am willing to help mamma in

every conceivable way. I devote an hour of every day to dusting the parlors and taking care of my own room, and often make cake and jelly, besides arranging the flowers and fruit whenever we have company. But I don't think mothers appreciate what their children do for them. I know mine takes all this as her due, and nothing more. She seldom even thanks me for it."

Here is the source of discontent. Our daughters fit loosely into their places in our homes. What they do there is for us, and of grace, and they are defrauded if due recompence of thanks is not awarded to them for "helping mother." We are not likely to rebel at this order of things, ours being glad and willing service. The fear of drawing down the suspicion of selfishness upon our singleness of loyalty by assigning a share of domestic cares to them as the work they must undertake *for their own sake*, blinds us to their real good.

Where is the mother who has the moral

courage to say to the emancipated school-girl: " You begin now another and important novitiate. Under my tutelage you must study housekeeping in all departments and details. In one year's time you should be competent to take my place if necessary. I expect and shall demand of you a practical knowledge of baking, roasting, boiling, frying, broiling, as well as of mixing. It is not enough for you to understand the art of preparing 'fancy' sweets. You must be versed in the mysteries of soups, gravies and *entrées*. Moreover, you must learn how to market wisely, and to accommodate expenditures to means. All this and much more of the same sort of housewifery will be imperatively needed should you marry. If you remain single it will yet be of incalculable service to you and a wholesome exercise of mind and body."

Yet this is plain common sense, and the sagacity of pure, disinterested affection. We are cowardly, false to ourselves that we do

not put it in practice—false to our trust, and cruel to our darlings in hardening our hands and toughening our muscles in order to keep theirs soft and flaccid.

It is almost inevitable that our young married women should break down under the sudden weight of care and labor. Tempers are frayed at the edges, spines ache and hearts are wrung to anguish. The overtaxed spirit joins in the protest of the feeble flesh against the strain and the torture.

At whose door lies the fault?

In many instances, mother and daughter may justly divide it. One errs after serious and unselfish calculation of the weight of two evils. She can force her child into a delightless routine of labor; be stung and stabbed by the sight of her reluctant performance of detested impositions and the hearing of her mutinous murmurs over the squandering of her precious time on what servants are bound to perform. Or, she can let her bonny nestling flutter free from servile chains, gladdening

her home that now is, with chirp and song, with no prevision of future enslavement.

The daughter sins, generally, through ignorance and vainglorious judgment, convinced honestly that she has argued the whole matter out to a logical conclusion. Her time and strength are worth more than a seamstress's, or chambermaid's or cook's wages. The world teems with seamstresses, chambermaids, and cooks, clamoring for the very work she abhors. On the right hand she sees demand. On the left, supply. Political and social economy say, "Bring the two together," whatever domestic maxims may advise. Before condemning the girl for shortsighted policy, let us see whether the fond father's reasonings do not tend in the same direction. The labor of an educated woman—especially if that woman is *his* child, and her scholastic education has cost him thousands of dollars—should, he predicates, command a better market-price than that of an illiterate Celt, whose schooling cost

nothing. Else, the aforesaid thousands were a poor investment, and higher education a failure.

If there is a certainty that his accomplished daughter will never be summoned by Love or Duty to the presidency of another home than his; an establishment to be kept in order and provided with things suitable; in which people must sleep, eat and be cared for—his representations have much weight. It seems a sorry business—a waste of fine material, to break in a blooded colt to the work of a draught-horse. But the blooded horse that cannot draw at all in harness will hardly be selected for family use.

To descend to particulars; German, *belles-lettres* and music suffer no serious interruption from the hour or two of stirring exercise that precede the season of study. The fair novice is better in health, and if her conscience is rightly adjusted, more buoyant in spirit for the light housework that falls to her share. There is unfeigned joy in the knowledge that

she is helping, if only so much as by the lifting of a finger, to ease the weight her mother has carried, unaided, all these years.

The saddest story written in this country and century is in a book from which I have already drawn one or two extracts. "The Story of Avis" leaves the reader with an uncured, perhaps an incurable, heart-ache. It appears ungracious to handle professionally, as befits a housewifely matron, heart-fibres so tense and sore as are those of the woman-artist who is the heroine. It seems inhuman, too, after the author's plea :—

"Women upon whom domestic details sit with a natural, or even an acquired grace, will need to cultivate their sympathies with this young recoiling creature."

In spite of our sober judgment and disapproval of the fallacies of "Avis's" reasoning, our sympathies with her grow fast and warm without cultivation, when we read her life-long protest against these—to her—abhorrent "details."

"I hate to make my bed ; and I hate, hate to sew chemises ; and I hate, hate, *hate* to go cooking around the kitchen. It makes a crawling down my back to sew. But the crawling comes from hating ; the more I hate, the more I crawl. And Mamma never cooked about the kitchen. I think that is a servant's work. I'm very ugly to Aunt Chloe sometimes, Papa. On the whole, Papa," added the child gravely, "I have so many sorrows in this world that I don't care to live!"

Almost twenty years later, won as we are made to comprehend, against her will and conscience, since she is wedded to Art, we see the betrothed Avis :—

"Across her picture or her poem, looking up a little blindly, she had listened to the household chatter of women with a kind of gentle indifference, such as one feels about the habits of the Feejeeans. Unbleached cotton, like X in the algebra, represented an unknown quantity of oppressive but ex-

tremely distant facts. How had she brought herself into a world where the fringe upon a towel must become a subject requiring fixed opinions?"

The author of "The Silent Partner" and "Hedged In" could not, consistently with the depths of true, helpful womanliness in her own nature, and her appreciation of the dignity and worth of common things and common lives, do otherwise than paint Avis as an abnormal creation—a stray bird that had lost herself in a foreign and uncongenial clime. As a child she is to be pitied more than loved. Only the mother who died while she was an infant in years, understood her, even then. The "pretty mother," who was "a thin sweet vision, like a fading sketch to the young girl's heart," when "she recalled with incisive distinctness" that she had been "snatched, kissed and cried over with a gush of incoherent words and scalding tears," after putting the question,—

"Did you never want to run away after

you had married Papa? Did you never care about the theatre again?"

The wife (she "had, beyond doubt, the histrionic gift"—so said her grave husband) sobbed over the baby who had but this "glimpse into her mother's heart"—"Oh, my little woman! Mother's little woman, little woman!" Avis's unrest and her genius were inherited.

As a girl, we wonder at Coy's fondness for one whose affections, with heart and ambitions, are bound up in her art. A wife she ought never to have been at all, and maternal devotion is born slowly out of throes of as deadly anguish as those that brought her children into a home where they were not wanted. Her natural inclination and her subsequent growth are all on one side. She suffers from this excrescent development as from any other deformity. It is not more fair to accept her as a representative woman than to take as the typical American student a young collegian of whom I have lately

heard—a semi-idiot upon most subjects and utterly deficient in common sense. He cannot do an example in simple Addition or Subtraction ; in History he is a dunce, and in Geography would be puzzled if asked to define the difference between a continent and an isthmus. But he acquires languages as by intuition, and is the lingual prodigy of his university, writing and speaking Latin, Greek, German and Spanish with equal facility.

Still another man is a walking Encyclopædia of historical and political lore. He can give the date and substance of not only every notable debate in the American Congress since the establishment of our independent government, but of every Parliamentary battle that has interested the English people for the last hundred years. Burke, Chatham, Fox, North and Canning are as real in their personality to him as Bright and Gladstone. But this phenomenal memory takes hold of nothing beyond historical and parliamentary

detail. For all he knows of general literature and of the practical concerns of life, he might be an animated copy of the *Congressional Globe* bound in whole calf.

Few men are great, even in one direction—and fewer women. This small number of both sexes may plan the work of the world. It is carried into successful operation from age to age by people of evenly-balanced minds and healthful energies. Your one-ideaed man is as truly diseased in perception and in judgment as is the woman who rides her hobby of art, literature, social, religious, or political reform rough-shod over the wreck of domestic comfort and happiness. She who neglects to comb her hair and darn her children's socks while she is painting for posterity, or accepts an invitation to address a Woman's Suffrage Convention that calls her a hundred miles away from home when her baby lies ill with croup, would be as selfish in devotion to her specialty had her choice lighted on Kensington embroidery or

preserves. I was once so unfortunate as to talk with a distressed mother who could not see her way clear to go to her eldest son, dying from injuries received in a railway accident, because she was in the middle of spring house-cleaning.

"And *you* know the servants wouldn't half do it, if I were not here to look after them!" she moaned.

The boy died, asking with his last coherent word, "When is mother coming?" She never blamed herself. She was the victim of circumstances over which she had no control. Had she been a literary woman of note, the story would have found its way into the newspapers. Being of a strictly domestic turn she missed the distinction she merited by singleness of devotion to The Object of her life.

Let us be fair in judgment and in verdict. While we do not shield morbidly-absorbed artists and housekeepers from censure by the excuse that, as women, evenness of develop-

ment is not to be expected of them, we do not forget the measure of obloquy due to him who forgets wife, children, and his own physical needs in warehouse, office, or *atelier*. His neglect of assumed and sacred duties tells less upon the surface of home and society than would the like dereliction on the part of her who must order dinners and look after the family wardrobe, but it is one and the same sin with hers.

The perfect intellect in either sex is many-sided, rounded, firm in poise, wide in comprehension of the infinite, delicate in perception of the finite.

I remark in passing, that a charming example of the truth just stated is exhibited in a volume lately read in our home circle with such delighted interest as usually waits upon the perusal of an engaging romance. It is entitled, "The Formation of Vegetable Mold through the Action of Worms, with Observations on their Habits." The author is Charles Darwin, LL.D., F.R.S.

It is not then a token of inherent mental or spiritual dignity when the educated daughter refuses initiation into the homely ceremonies of cookery—objects to the troublesome details which are soon comprehended and put into practice by the half-witted Celt or the Scandinavian who cannot speak a word of the language of her adopted land. The intellect that recoils from the acquisition of the simple principles of mixing, baking, and boiling, because they disturb the calm balance of thought, must rest upon a very slender pivot. The apprenticeship to unfamiliar and not agreeable work that makes college Jane “crawl,” does not rub into her nerves more roughly than the alphabet galls the dull-minded scullion thumbing her “First Reader” every night at the kitchen-table. She has been twitted with her ignorance—“a gurrl grown, and not able to read an’ spell!” Literature and all pertaining to letters are quite out of her line. She will probably not read one book a year after pre-

paring herself for the work ; but spurred by a single incentive, she drudges on stubbornly.

A servant of my own once begged me to "tache her to write." Her betrothed had told her, with the refined gallantry of his class, that he was "fair ashamed of her because she couldn't so much as read a love-letter, but must take it to the mistress to know what was in it." She had never been to school since her tenth year, and could hardly make out the sense of a printed page, but in three months' time she penned, without my assistance, a note to her absent lover :

"DEAR MIKE,—This is to tel you I am wel and hoppin you are enjyin the same blesin thank god. I have lerned how to wright an also how to reade wrighting. now send on yure leters.

"no moore at present from yure lovin

"MARY O'REILLY."

She taught me many and more valuable lessons than she had from me as she sat each night under the shaded nursery lamp, her coarse stiff fingers cramped upon the pen-barrel, and made straight lines, pot-hooks, and hangers, until the perspiration broke through the pores of her red forehead.

"D'ye think I'll ever be an *author*, ma'am?" she would ask anxiously sometimes, in submitting the exercise to my inspection.

"Yes, Mary," I always answered, with no disposition to amusement at her blunder.

Referring once more to "Avis," we read :

"The usual little feminine bustle of sewing he (Ostrander) missed without regret. Women fretted him with their eternal nervous stitch, stitching, and fathomless researches into the nature of tatting and crochet. He rather admired his wife for sharing so fully his objection to them. Avis was that rare woman who had never embroidered a tidy."

Again, "It was not much perhaps to set herself now to conquer this little occasion ;

not much to descend from the sphinx to the drain-pipe at one fell swoop ; not much to watch the potatoes while Julia went to market ; to answer the door-bell while the jelly was straining ; to dress for dinner after her guests were in the parlor ; to resolve to engage a table-girl to-morrow because Julia tripped with the gravy ; to sit wondering how the ironing was to get done, while her husband talked of Greek sculpture—to bring creation out of chaos, law out of disorder, and a clear head out of wasted nerves. Life is composed of such little strains ; and the artistic temperament is only more sensitive to, but can never hope to escape them. It was not much ; but let us not forget that it is under the friction of such atoms that women far simpler, and so far that yoke far stronger than Avis, have yielded their lives as a burden too heavy to be borne."

The summary is painfully realistic. Each of us who has kept house for a single year subscribes groaningly to the accuracy of the

sketch. The question raised by my reason, and supported by experience is, whether even to the artistic temperament brier-scratches are ever fatal injuries. Annoyances they are, these atomic particles and points that bury themselves in tender skins. While the smart is new the sufferer is prone to cry out that her senses are deserting her; but when the prickles are withdrawn, brave spirits arise superior to temporary irritation. A woman who had professed her willingness to spend two hundred days "in copying a carrot that hangs twenty feet away from you against the wall" ought to have been not merely brave but patient.

Domestic life has its peculiar trials, but so has every other condition of this, our mortal probation. They who wear thin shoes and step gingerly will feel the pebbles in the path. It is the firm tread of the stout boot that presses them into the earth.

You may pass a long, useful, and contented life without learning how to embroider a

tidy. As American homes now are—and there is faint prospect of reconstruction of our domestic system—no American woman, however exalted or assured her social rank, or whatever may be her accomplishments, can afford to remain ignorant of practical housewifery. This is a rule without exception. Disregard of it is unwise and selfish. Absorption in your chosen art or profession, however worthy it may be in itself, becomes a fault when it ignores the claims of others upon time and consideration. It is *not* enough that your aims are high, your ends noble. The canal leads to the ocean as surely as does the broad beneficent river, but it is only a straight, muddy ditch throughout its length.

To absorb, to retain, to be nourished, to grow—all this is to *receive*. This is Happiness. To give of what you have and are—of *yourself*—that others may be better and happier—this is Blessedness.

By a beautiful provision of Nature, self-denial and work offered in this spirit and for

this purpose ennable instead of dwarf heart and intellect. The antithesis of this proposition is no less true; to wit, that the pursuit of any object to the exclusion from thought and care of all besides, especially when the thing is coveted because the possession of it will contribute to our own enjoyment or advantage, will eventually harden and narrow the character.

To be an excellent housekeeper is in itself one of the lesser aims of life to a woman of culture and refinement. The ministry to her kind by means of an intelligent comprehension of it, and just personal attention to "domestic details," should be a study and a purpose.

DRESS.

"*Katherine.* I'll have no bigger! This doth fit the time,
And gentlewomen wear such caps as these.

I never saw a better-fashioned gown,
More quaint, more pleasing, more commendable.
" *Taming of the Shrew.*"

A STATISTICIAN, curious in such matters, has laid before me a computation to the effect that one third of the time of the working force of the average American household is employed in making clean the clothes soiled during the other two thirds. Furthermore, that at least one third of the quantity remaining after this subtraction, is consumed in buying, making, and remodelling the garments designed to cover these perishable frames of ours.

"Gallantry forbids me to hint," comments my philosophical friend, "how many immortal beings are, by this order of affairs,

converted into galvanized dummies for the display of ‘clothes.’ Much less would I dare conjecture how many women become, through such agencies as I have described, variegated husks, gilded swaths enclosing shrivelled kernels and dusty hollowness.”

All this catches the fancy of cynic and philosopher (I do not use the terms in this connection as interchangeable). Men are so used to declaiming against feminine methods of doing work, and feminine fancies, that they recognize the familiar jargon, accept it and pass it on, unchallenged and unchanged.

Shaking our judgment free from plausible platitudes, let us consider one or two self-evident propositions.

We must—being in a state of “artificial civilization”—wear clothes. Clothes must be clean, whole, decent, and suited in quality and make to the wearer. In the last clause we descry Prince Ahmed’s pavilion. The millet-seed, when cracked, reveals the count-

less involutions of a canopy which unfurls to cover a mighty army.

What is "suitable"?

While the question seems to be clogged with peculiar complications in our democratic country, those who have travelled afar can testify that neither the peasant's garb, usually so picturesque, often so uncomfortable and senseless, nor conventional robes, rid the women who wear them from the pleasing anxieties that roll up into a burden of care with those who exalt "Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" into the dignity of a Profession. The Quaker maiden, with face modest and fresh as an English daisy, bestows as much thought upon the texture and shade of the dove-colored gown and close bonnet as does Miss McFlimsey upon the gorgeous costume to be ruined in one night's whirl at a "crush" ball. In fact, I doubt if careful examination into the circumstances and mental exercises of the two women would not reveal that she who clothes herself and family neatly, but with painstaking

economy, making “auld claithes gar amaist as well as new,” expends more time and pains upon ways, means, and effects in dress than does she whose “variegated husk” is putative evidence of “dusty hollowness.”

Frown as the utilitarian and ascetic may upon the pretty trifling, the truth cannot be set aside that dress has been a fine-art throughout the ages that have groaned themselves away into Eternity Past, since Eve, crouched among the bushes of Eden, hurriedly sewed up the seams of her fig-leaf apron.

Hear stern Isaiah’s prophecy against the wanton daughters of Zion :

“ In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls and their round tires like the moon ; the chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers, the bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the head-bands, and the tablets, and the earrings, the rings, and the nose-jewels, the changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples,

and the crisping-pins, the glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the vails."

We are moved by the glib catalogue to a shrewd surmise that the seer may have copied it from the advertising column of the "*Jerusalem Journal des Modes*," or interviewed a court-milliner.

The world and women are better and more sensible now than in the generation when the fisherman Apostle—himself a married man, with a mother-in-law resident under his roof—recommends the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit to wives, as preferable to "plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel."

An unprejudiced child, in reading a passage that has been quoted into shreds, must perceive that Peter does not prescribe this spiritual adornment as the bodily covering, or prohibit the "putting on of apparel." We have outgrown the idea that sin *per se* lurks in furs, laces, velvets, or even diamonds. The Wesleyan sister who, being in conscience

bound to draw the line of demarcation between church and world somewhere, drew it at feathers, wearing flowers instead in her Sunday bonnet, would be laughed at now in her own denomination. Every such distinction is arbitrary, and the condemnation of recusants which is based upon it is unchristian and irrational. It is such fierce elevation of non-essentials into test-questions of inward graces that has brought scandal upon the professors and teachers of a Faith which is holy, harmless, and undefiled.

Nor is there folly in cultivating a just taste for this Fine Art. A study of becomingness, of harmony of fabrics and colors—a knowledge of the prevailing modes and the ability to adapt these to the wishes and means of wearers—are as reasonable, in their way, as the endeavor to be so far acquainted with the general principles of music and painting as to be competent to discern between the good and bad of each art. Because a worthy thing is abused there is no need of casting

wholesale opprobrium upon it. Because a long-haired cockney has nursed his natural liking for music into a tumorous outgrowth that absorbs every other intellectual sense and offends the taste of his neighbors, am I to eschew Mendelssohn and shudder at Wagner? If my acquaintance over the way, in her ambition to become the first woman-artist in America, lets her house go unswept, her youngest-born tumble about the front yard clad in a single brief garment, and his predecessors in age roam the town as wild as Zulus, shall I look coldly upon Raphael and doubt the piety of Fra Angelico?

It would be fatuous to dispute the statement that thousands of women in Christian lands yearly sacrifice virtue and their hopes of heaven to a mad passion for dress and ornament; or that tens of thousands starve their minds by ultra-devotion to that which treats of the seemly covering of the corporeal part. For such devotees sane people have the same measure of contemptuous pity that

they feel for gluttons and drunkards. The “all things richly to enjoy” of Divine gift and permission have been perverted into licentiousness. There is a lust for dress which falls short of downright bestiality only by being in itself trivial and mean. It is the infatuation of small minds, and is, almost unexceptionally, the external sign of excessive vanity and a limited range of ideas. The capital *I* that symbolizes personality, and should, in width, hardly exceed a filament of gossamer, is stretched into a cloak for the envelopment of the whole being. Over the upper edge the wearer sees the outer world by glimpses.

“What *I* shall wear” is, in the circumstances, a consideration of gigantic interest. That so few others care what the result of the lucubrations may be, or note the “effect” that has drawn off the shallow pool of thought to the muddy ooze of the bottom, is so seldom suspected by the egotheist that she hardly needs our pity.

This is one extreme of the arc described by the pendulum, as the other is personal neglect and slovenliness. No woman—or man either, for that matter—can afford to be absolutely indifferent to dress. The obligation laid upon our sex to *make* home by seeing to it that food is well-cooked and attractively served, and rooms clean, comfortable and pretty, extends to neatness of person and such attention to attire as shall not only avoid offending the eye, but please it and gratify just taste.

This may be denominated the *Æsthetic Morality of Dress*. I earnestly commend the consideration of it to those wives and daughters who imagine—if we are to judge by their practice—that working-clothes must needs be slatternly; the women who make a market for the cheap calico wrappers trimmed with tawdry strips of more gayly-colored chintz, that flap against the door-posts of low-priced stores. They are the class who sit down collarless to breakfast, their hair in crimping-

pins, their feet in ragged gaiters, or slippers down at the heel. It is hard for a woman to respect herself in such a garb. Whether she suspects it or not, it is yet more difficult for her husband or father to respect her. However busy a man he may be, he would rather wait ten minntes longer for his morning meal when his wife or daughter is the cook, in order that she may slip on a decent dress, with a line of white at the throat—that indispensable insignia of ladyhood.

“The absence of a collar will impart a cast of vulgarity to the finest face,” wrote Miss Leslie in the first quarter of this century.

It is a rule that holds good in this, the last.

There is a mixture of parsimony and ostentation in reserving one’s best clothes, sometimes the only passable ones, for the delectation of “company” at home and abroad. The habit is apt to extend to other things; to beget a fashion of dishonest reckoning and sharp practice in word and behavior, if it does not finally confirm itself into the principle of

putting money, strength, talent, courtesy, even religion where they will show to most advantage and bring in the largest returns of personal benefit. It is scarcely possible to overestimate the influence of these minor points of ethics upon character and conduct. Prevarication in action is as culpable as utter falsehood. She who wears ragged underclothes beneath a velvet coat and spreads her children's beds with coarse, unbleached sheeting, that she may drape the state couch in the guest-chamber with fine linen, is seldom honest and thorough in other respects. The father or husband who pays for fine clothes has surely the right to see more of them than the visitor of an hour or a day.

It is not practicable to lay down any general directions, much less specific rules, for the guidance of those who would dress tastefully "if they only knew how." In this regard fashion-plates are a nuisance and Jennie June a snare to such as have not the root of the matter in them. A suggestion or two, how-

ever, may suffice for the correction of glaring abuses of the liberty of construction and action which obtains with some of the uninformed.

Unless you have money in abundance and irrefragable taste, do not essay striking costumes. A bonnet of "leonine" yellow, crossed by a lily-white plume, may become a beautiful brunette at a fashionable reception. With a promenade suit it is vulgar; in church it approximates profanation. She who can afford but one best dress for street, visiting, and Sunday, should choose black or sober colors, and shun the, to some people, easily-besetting sin of gaudy trimmings. Wear what you will in the way of light and fanciful raiment in-doors for afternoons and evenings, if a florid taste craves expression. In public places they are a solecism.

Study consistency of attire everywhere and always. A silk cloak and a common stuff dress are, in Mr. Weller's phrase, "unekal." When you air your second-best suit

abroad, let the second-best bonnet keep it in countenance. A dress hat and a cheap gown remind one versed in the etiquette of apparel of a cactus in full bloom above the ungainly stem and abortive leafage.

Hygienic reformers themselves being judges, there has never been a costume—national, provincial, or individual—which met the requisitions of health and good sense. Eve's fig-leaves had the merit of simplicity, economy, and comfort in the climate of Paradise. Her daughters have seldom compassed so much with one hundred times the labor. The practical mind has little pleasure in fighting unreformable abuses. It is, moreover, possible that this question of modern appareling is a red rag which has sent the blood in blinding surges to the assailants' heads. There is a tremendous weight of evidence in support of the assertion that women dress more comfortably and more in conformity to the laws of decency and health now than did their

mothers, grandmothers, and very-far-back—indeed ancestresses. We have Isaiah and ancient sculpture in corroborative evidence of this audacious assertion.

We wear flannel next the skin; plenty of loose, warm undergarments in winter, thick shoes and fur coats, few skirts, and those short enough to allow us to walk with ease, and educated women no longer lace tightly.

Dr. Thomas, in his elaborate work “On the Diseases of Women,” writes :

“ Chapter upon chapter has been written against tight lacing in so vehement a style that the reader, if she did not reflect, might suppose that to this abuse could be traced the whole catalogue of feminine ills. If perchance, however, she inspected the unyielding stays which once compressed the sturdy form of Alice Bradford, and which are now preserved in Pilgrim Hall in Plymouth, she would at once see that the indictment was not a valid one; and similar objections might be raised against all the other causes

which I have advanced, viewed as isolated influences."

Tight lacing makes one intensely uncomfortable to begin with, and long persistence in the foolish practice reddens the nose irretrievably and as certainly as tight shoes produce sick headache. Volumes of physiological argument would not abolish the fashion of wasp-like waists as speedily and effectually as the announcement made above. The outraged blood, forced out of its legitimate channel, retreats vengefully to a point where its settlement must ever remain a source of keenest mortification. I have heard of a woman who would have been beautiful but for this blemish, and, in desperation, applied leeches repeatedly to the inside of the nostrils to abate the nuisance. The experiment was unsuccessful; the sullen red held the fort obstinately. Nor have I ever known a case where lungs and heart were subjected to long-continued compression, in which in due time the violence done to the vitals was

not proclaimed by a “crimson-tipped” nose as fiery as a dram-drinker’s—that is, unless the author of the deed died of consumption, apoplexy, or *angina pectoris* before the height of bloom was perfected.

The fact of the desuetude of the suicidal custom,—to the unborn offspring of the offenders often a murderous one—is proved by unmistakable signs. Where fifty women padded their busts thirty years ago, perhaps one exceptionally flat-breasted one does now. Most of our girls need no such appliance, being broad of shoulder and deep of chest, and our elderly matrons show a growing propensity to copy their English sisters in a gain of plumpness with advancing years. To be thin is no longer the acme of feminine desire, especially when a kindly coating of flesh is needed to fill out sinking cheeks and defacing wrinkles.

The young girl should be *fitted* with some one of the numerous excellent bodices or corsets now in vogue, by the time she is

thirteen or fourteen. These, we may remark, are totally unlike Alice Bradford's "unyielding stays," or those with which our own mothers girt them about—machines as straight and well-nigh as stiff as tree-boxes. They were drawn as tightly about the soft upper parts of the abdomen as silken and hempen strings could pull them. Many had not the strength to lace their corsets *properly*. I have a vivid recollection of standing by, an open-eyed and commiserating witness of the mysteries of the dressing-room, when as a child I was permitted to see grown-up young lady visitors prepare for dinner or dance. Each, in turn, commanded the services of a stout serving-maid who corded her with a power of muscle that would have insured a Saratoga trunk against the most energetic baggage-smasher. Upon ordinary occasions the lady, if she were of an independent turn, laced herself up, tussling valiantly to insure her bondage. A common custom was to cast a loop of the lace about

the bed-post, as a convenient belaying-pin, and strain upon this with the whole weight of body and muscle until the creaking construction of buckram and bone closely banded the waist as in a vise. The breasts were forced up to the collar-bone ; the ribs gradually compressed until they overlapped one another. Women fainted in crowded assemblies then, for want of breath, which would never have had room to re-enter the collapsed lungs had not the instant expedient in all cases been to cut the corset-strings. Boarding-school girls often slept without loosening the lacings that would require half-an-hour's work in the morning to make fast again. We of this generation are paying, in life-blood and tears, for this unholy work.

Our girl's corset is pliable and carefully adjusted to the figure. It is the mother's fault if the child purchases a "nineteen inch," when she should wear nothing smaller than "twenty-two." Unless this blunder is made, it is not possible for such a corset as,

for example, "*La Reine*," to press hurtfully upon any part of the frame. The hips are protected, as is the abdomen, by their covering, the spine gently braced and kept straight, and the swell of the breast encouraged by the amplitude of the curves enclosing it. One recommendation of such a bodice is that it will not continue to fit if tightly laced. The thin whalebones bend viciously—then break, and prick the sides of the transgressor. The finely-tempered steel fronts guarding chest and stomach snap and the garment must be thrown aside, ruined through ill-usage. Another time the foolish wearer will know better than to attempt to defy Nature and the Rational Corset-maker.

I make a place gratefully here for part of an article on "Dress Reform," which I clip from the Newark (N. J.) *Daily Advertiser*. It is a "leader," from the pen of the scholarly and practical editor, Dr. S. B. Hunt.

I have an object in drawing freely from prominent journals pertinent comments upon

the subject of this work. It is interesting and edifying to note in these the drift of the best minds, the conclusions reached by the most acute perceptions in a profession that holds in its working ranks some of the ablest men of our times. The Press is not an instructor alone nor yet the minute recorder of passing events, nor again only the Physician that counts pulse, respiration, degrees of temperature in the system of the mighty Public it has in ward. It is the Seer of the Century, chronicling the coming of wind and storm and pestilence and the majesty of fair weather, when air and sky are to the common observer without presage.

I insert extracts from periodicals and from books—as well written and as much to the point under consideration as Dr. Hunt’s—in the body of our volume, in preference to using them as foot-notes, for two reasons.

I would avail myself to the full of the apt quotation, borrowing for my opinions all the aid the endorsement can give. And, second-

ly, I would insure for the extract a reading more careful than the casual glance that scarcely lingers longer on the starred footnote than while the page is somewhat leisurely turned.

The testimony of so intelligent a professional man and writer upon physiology and hygiene is not to be carelessly dismissed, even by the radical unused to seeing over, or around, his hobby.

"Men are supposed to dress with simple reference to comfort. Women, for some inscrutable reason, are equally supposed to torture themselves for the sake of shape, and there has been no end of foolish talk on the subject of tight-lacing and small waists, all resulting in absurd and inartistic exaggerations of the female form. The humbugs in ladies' dress are plain enough, and any observer, even the most charitable, detects the padding of the too voluminous form, interrupted by a closely girded and slender waist. How many volumes have been written on

the subject of tight lacing can never be told. It has been howled about from platforms and in all the virtuous magazines. But the fact is that a woman who affects loose garments is lazy and violates the laws of her formation. The present style of dress, close-fitting and clinging to the form, is unmanly, but it is very womanly.

"The wiser anatomists and physiologists say that a man breathes with his abdomen. There is a regular increase in the expansion of his chest down to the line of the midriff or diaphragm. The lower ribs are freely movable, widen out with every inspiration, and crawl in with every expiration, while the muscles of the abdominal walls supply the exhaust and the expulsive force of the lungs above. That constitutes the manly form. It is a true part of his machinery. But it is not womanly, and only a lazy, or, to use a phrase as descriptive as it is coarse, a 'sozling' woman will habitually wear a loose gown and neglect what physiologists regard

as the proper support of the female form when engaged in the industries of life, in walking or in the upright position. The universal sense of women, so far as regards decorum in appearance, is to be ‘well set-up,’ like a soldier going on guard-mount, who is expected to be clean throughout, closely-buttoned, and steadily erect. When we speak of a man who is ‘soldierly,’ we mean a fellow with high shoulders, full and capacious waist, and thin flanks, with rather light weight in the quarters. When we consult the female graces—which fully expressed mean the highest and noblest health of woman—we mean precisely the opposite conditions. ‘A low forehead is an excellent thing in woman,’ and with that go the drooping shoulder, the diminishing waist, and the full lower form which it is a disgrace for any man to carry around. The Greek sculptors had this idea exactly, and it is charmingly expressed in the ‘Three Graces,’ a work which is as pure as it is beautiful.

" There is another point in this which we do not think involves any other indelicacy than such as pertains to all anatomical facts. When a woman breathes, or it may be a little untrained and ill-cared-for girl, she breathes with her upper ribs and lifts her collar-bones. No healthy man ever breathes in that direction. When we see a man puffing up his upper chest the immediate suggestion is that consumption is his doom. With a woman the same lung motion is an evidence of sweet and glorious health. The bottom fact is, that the nearer a woman approaches the masculine form the more unsexed she becomes. The reason of the female form, the scanty waist, the strong but narrow diaphragm, are a part of the diplomacy of nature, and mean the resistance of our occasional growing force, which, with a man's natural form, would obstruct the action of the heart and impede the respiration. The anatomists, who have seen thousands of skeletons of savage or civilized training, find

always the diminishing waist in women, and they know why.

"After all the lectures on tight lacing, the truth is that Nature demands by her most imperative laws that women should have small waists, and that the misery and harm undoubtedly inflicted by the over-use of corsets is only a blind and ignorant obedience to an instinct which, properly directed, is graceful and natural. Still, there are competent gentlemen who think that their wives and daughters should have the same form of chest as themselves, and there are doctrinarians who reason that instead of breathing with the thorax, as women always do, they should breathe with the abdomen, as men always do. God ordered otherwise."

We may further congratulate our sex upon the abolition of the terrible custom of wearing upon hips and stomach such an immoderate number of skirts as were essential to the peace of mind of the fashionist who flourished in our mothers' time, or in our school-days. It was

not an exaggeration when the satiric cartoons of illustrated weeklies portrayed the full-dressed belle wedged in a door of regulation width, or filling the whole interior of a coach, her escort riding upon the roof. Over the wide disspread cage of wire or crinoline that gave the balloon-shape to the outer casings, she sported twelve or fifteen petticoats, most of them heavy with starch and tuckings. On the top of all floated a gown-skirt ten yards in circumference, and often flounced at the bottom.

I well recollect the horrified expression of a physician who, on being aroused at midnight by the sudden illness of his daughter, picked up from a chair her clothing, *minus* the dress proper, as she had cast it aside at retiring, and bore it off to the store-room to be weighed. There were *twenty pounds* of it. Just at that era of Fashion's history, corsets went entirely "out." This girl, whose seizure was neuralgia of the stomach, had carried this incubus, bound by tapes, about a

waist defended from their pressure by one thin garment of cotton cloth or linen. It was not unusual, on laying off the clothing at night, to discover that the strings had cut a raw line in skin and flesh.

Our dear Mrs. Delany thus describes the court-dress (date of January 23, 1738) of Lady Huntingdon—Whitfield's Lady Huntingdon—the warm advocate ten years thereafter of the principles of the “Calvinistic Methodists :”

“ Her petticoat was black velvet, embroidered with chenille ; the pattern, a large stone vase filled with ramping flowers that spread almost over a breadth of the petticoat from the bottom to the top. Between each vase of flowers was a pattern of gold shells, and foliage embossed and most heavily rich. The gown was white satin, embroidered also with chenille, mixt with gold ornaments. No vases on the sleeve, but two or three on the tail. It was a most labored piece of finery, the pattern much properer for a

stucco staircase than the apparel of a lady—a mere shadow *that tottered under every step that she took under the load.*"

In 1760 she commends a "*neglige*" for her granddaughter, with a "stomacher made to pin on," so as not to drag the shoulders of the growing girl forward, and subjoins most sensibly :

"The *vanity* and *impertinence* of dress is always to be avoided, but a decent compliance with the fashion is less affected than any remarkable negligence of it."

It is refreshing to reflect that we no longer endanger our lives by walking through slush and upon damp pavements in thin slippers, or load spine and diaphragm with external applications of "*vanity*" and vexation of spirit no less than of body, or wear pyramid-al helmets a foot high of puff and powder, or short waists that bring the stricture of skirt-bindings and gown-belts directly upon the tender breasts and most vulnerable portion of the lungs. Our costume has still enough un-

cured follies encrusting it, but they are not enormities.

Now for the homelier but not less important details of the toilette. And if the intelligent reader is amused and provoked at the circumstantiality with which simple directions are given—"the things which everybody knows!"—I beg her to believe the assertion that everybody does not obey in these respects what seem to her the dictates of common decency and such knowledge of health laws as the poorest and meanest Christian in this country should possess. Everybody does *not* know—or knowing, does not live up to her belief—that exhalations from the body are dirt, and that dirt of all kinds, if we except dry earth, is malodorous.

The night-dress should be warm in winter, cool in summer, and always loose in every part, that the blood may recede naturally from the brain, and the slackened play of heart and lungs go on evenly and healthfully. Whatever has been worn in the day must be

shaken hard when taken off, and each piece hung or laid out separately upon nail or chair. The like precaution ought to be observed in removing the night-gown in the morning. The clinging humors thrown off by the pores, sleeping and waking, may be dislodged in part while still warm. If suffered to soak in cooling into the fabric, they become offensive to sight and smell, and the fruitful source of disease. In plain language, they may be described as effete animal matter that decomposes rapidly, and with putrefaction, emits a sickening odor.

Immediately upon rising, the bed-coverings should be removed, shaken, and spread out over foot-board or chairs, and the mattress be left exposed to the air admitted from open windows. The practice of making up a bed while still warm from the heat of the human body is unclean, and, like most uncleanness, unwholesome. The body actually *loses weight* during the hours of sleep, as has been demonstrated by repeated experiments.

The escaping effluvia (the term is just, however impolite) hang, a viewless vapor in the air, steep linen, and reek in blankets. You can smell them on re-entering your closed bedroom after you have been in the outer air for a few minutes. If they were never so faintly colored, the day would break dimly upon your waking eyes. Were it possible to eliminate them from the air and condense them, you would behold a pound of corrupt matter from which you would shrink with loathing unutterable. Yet you swallow and inhale this with every word and breath while you remain in an unventilated sleeping-chamber.

Much of this liberated vapor is carbonic-acid gas, and deadly to all animal life. The bad taste in your mouth before you brush your teeth, the "tight" feeling about your head, the slight giddiness and nausea that pass away in the bath—all are symptoms of one disorder. You are *poisoned!* Your bedroom, however elegant in its appoint-

ments, has been all night a *grotto del cane*. Unaired and undeodorized clothes upon bed or body are as truly empoisoned as was the shirt of Nessus ; albeit usually more slow in operation. Pile on clean blankets, shaken and cooled every morning, if you "sleep cold," and set a screen between you and direct draughts ; but secure, by means of lowered or raised sashes, a bounteous current of pure air to replenish the lung-supply and to sweep out noisome exudations.

It is often objected, when frequent changes of body-linen are recommended and positively enjoined in warm weather, that the family-wash is thereby made too heavy. Without staying to inquire what may be the truer economy in such cases, to pay laundress or druggist, I would suggest that the difficulty may be obviated in some measure by judicious management on the part of each wearer. Two changes per week will generally suffice, even in summer, *provided* every undergarment is shaken and aired thoroughly—when practi-

cable, sunned—before it is resumed. Thus the linen worn in the forenoon may be removed when one dresses for the afternoon, and hung where the air can blow freely over it until next morning. The set for afternoon has in turn the same opportunity of disinfection. A garment assumed while still damp with perspiration is sure to become offensive. This rule premises that aired raiment shall be put upon newly-washed bodies. The bath-room is the best preventive of excessive labor in the laundry. Body-linen that has been yellowed in the wearing has to be rubbed so hard that it soon wears out.

“Why,” asks Corinna Holgate in her study of Grecian Myths, preparatory to a “High Culture” tea—“*why* was Venus fabled to have arisen from the foam of the sea?”⁴

Aunt Ildy “shot back the answer, quick as a flash, an irony of common sense, out of a swift, frowning cloud of contempt”:

“Because you must be clean before you can be beautiful!”

GOSSIP.

"But the man did neither look up, nor regard, but raked to himself the straws, the small sticks, and dust of the floor."—*Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress*.

"People will talk. '*Ciascun lo dice*' is a tune that is played oftener than the national air of this country, or any other."—*Oliver Wendell Holmes*.

"I remember that Abbie Ann once put out her washing, and this fact kept the whole social element of Cedar Swamp on the *qui vive* for a number of days."—*Cape Cod Folks*.

DR. HOLLAND has told us that "the cure for gossip is culture."

The prescription is excellent—as far as it goes. But weeds spring faster and flourish more rankly in a ploughed and enriched field than in the hard soil of a common. It was into the swept and garnished house that the seven unclean spirits followed their host.

To the culture—intellectual—that sharpens perceptive faculties and disposes the whole mind to activity, must be added worthy and regular occupation, and just moral sense,

integrity of purpose and speech, and Christian charity in construction of others' actions and motives, if we would save our educated young women from the favorite pastime of their inferiors—gossiping.

Among the woful perversions of terms in our language, the inside-out twist which the good old Saxon word “gossip” has sustained may claim a bad eminence.

“Godsibb—a relation by a religious obligation. From God, and *sib*, an alliance.”

Thus Webster—and in close connection—“One who runs from house to house, telling news; an idle tattler.”

A pretty word, little used, is “gossipry.” It has a quaint crispness about it to which tongue and ear take kindly. It signifies “idle talk, gossip,” or—anomalous association!—“Spiritual relationship or affinity.”

It is evident to the non-philological reader, as to the verbalist, that we sorely need substantive and verb to express what we all have reason to know so well; that which, with

many women, fills up the gaps left in thoughts and lives by the absence of a specific object. One that would so absorb into itself the wandering energies, so possess the mind that everything small—using the word as a synonym of unworthy—would be crowded out. Without this, the runners that should be trained into use and fruitfulness, trail wildly hither and yon, and like the muck-rake, take up straws, and sticks, and dust. How intricate and unsightly is the mat thus formed, let the history of every neighborhood, the unwritten stories of blasted reputations, thwarted lives, and broken hearts testify.

Where is the first false step? At what juncture of the girl's experience does it begin to become pleasanter to believe the tale which casts a shadow than that which illumines; easier to credit disparagement of an acquaintance than to receive gladly a narrative which is honorable to the subject and to human nature? When—following the deflected line—do even the amiable and refined acquire a

positive relish for tainted meats—in culinary parlance, *high game*? Is there a biting spice of truth in the pessimistic *jeu d'esprit*—"There is something pleasant to us in the misfortunes of even our best friends?"

Am *I* uncharitable? hasty to judge and to condemn thoughtless speech? May it not be that righteous indignation at the unchecked growth of a popular evil takes on the vision and expression of personal rancor? The experience and observation that lead an individual teacher to a certain conclusion may be unfortunate and exceptional.

Test my declaration for yourself, my clean-hearted Mary, glowing with the novelty of the home-coming; eager to ply in the field which is the world, the craft learned in the garden-plot of the school. Relate to a lively circle of your compeers in social station and education, a story of human heroism, of virtue that was proof against temptation, of self-denial and sorrow borne meekly that others might not suffer, of patient toil for noble

ends. Use all the eloquence of feeling and forcible diction to send the lesson home to each heart. You are heard with attention, because the tale is cleverly wrought up. All combine to pronounce it "interesting," perhaps "beautiful and touching." One optimist boldly affirms that it is "gratifying to the finest feelings of the heart." Here and there an eye kindles or softens under a mist of unshed tears. But people, as a mass, are coy in the display of their "finest feelings." There is danger, where some are concerned, of mistaking the casket in which these treasures are stored for a lumber-chest. The main current of talk bears swiftly away from the topic introduced by you. The optimist may roll the sweet morsel under his tongue, but he does it after the manner of ruminating animals, in silence. There is little to provoke discussion in what you have related. It is too smooth and round, by half, for enterprising wits. To all it is commonplace. To some it is vapid.

Do not *you* supply an antipodal theme that

the experiment may be fairly tried. The probability is that you will not have to wait long before a cynical slur upon truth, goodness, faith—something that comes under the head of Paul's “whatsoever things are honorable, just, pure, lovely, of good report”—excites general mirth, tempered by weak disclaim. Or an adventurous spirit, ambitious of repute as a judge of character, a “knowing” critic, tells his tale of adroit hypocrisy or bare-faced iniquity. What I have long ago named in my own mind “the blue-bottle-fly instinct,” awakens at the dexterous touch, the scent of decay. The story is caught up ; tossed from an earnest listener to a laughing questioner, pulled to pieces that the juices and marrow may be sucked and the revellers fatten upon the extracted richness. Even the few who do not share in the feast are less disgusted than they think or would admit to others. They retain what they have not relished. The liméd twig does not hold them, but they carry away befouled feet.

The *gamin* who would not hearken to a story of a good little boy, unless he might afterwards be treated to one about *two* bad little boys—"uncommon rum uns, you know"—was honest in the expression of this instinct. At heart he was a nascent vulture, and in his simplicity, revealed the hankering after carion.

The deduction from these and kindred examples is humiliating, as tending to prove that the taste for "high" game is inborn, and that we possess it in common with vermin and the lower orders of birds of prey. It lurks, embryonic, in that recess of unimaginable horrors, the human heart, awaiting the process which is to warm it into active life, or cast it forth a wretched abortion. When allowed to survive, it grows very fast, as do all larvæ bred in corruption, and feeding upon the same. The tittle-tattle of idle moments becomes the tattle of hours that ought to be busy, and tattle, when it has conceived, brings forth scandal. Witness against a

neighbor, however light its import, passes almost inevitably, by insensible gradations, into *false witness*.

The girl retails with mischievous glee her cleverness in discovering the truth that a schoolmate's winter hat, which all the girls think "awfully stylish," was made by the wearer's eldest sister.

"Queer—isn't it? when their father is so rich. It must be sheer stinginess that leads them to do such things. Indeed the family *have* the reputation of being parsimonious. Or, it may be that they are not so well off as the world says. Their handsome carriage and horses, fine furniture, and lofty ways generally, may be but a hollow show. It is surprising—unaccountable—*wicked* in people to strain and struggle as some do to keep up appearances. Why can't they be honest, through and through?"

"Haven't I heard something about the low origin of the family?" ventures an auditor, musingly, her ambition and imagination

aroused by the narrative and tempting conjectures. "For aught we know, the mother may have been a milliner, and the taste for dabbling in bonnet-making may be hereditary. Such things do happen, you know, in what is called our best society."

"I can believe anything now!" The author of the gossip is always the first to believe in its authenticity. "I can never trust Carry Smith again as I did before I found out that about her hat. Why, she let us praise it, over and over, without once intimating that it did not come from a milliner's. Straws show which way the wind blows."

But now the hum and sting of the "maybes" from the hive on which she began tapping "for fun," have angered her. Mirth has given place to wrath.

"If there is one trait which I *hate* above all others, it is deception! I cannot endure anything in the least underhanded!"

From this time henceforward she and her clique will watch Carry Smith; keep her at

the focused-point of a moral microscope. By such easy descent is gained the plane of the slanderer. Without being consciously malicious, the bias of her belief is in the direction of detraction. It is safe—so runs her knowing reckoning—to parody the dreary old hymn and

“ Suspect some danger near
Where others see delight.”

The gossip prides herself, by and by—and alarmingly soon—upon not being hoodwinked by devices of amiable seeming that impose upon the ordinary observer. No action is motiveless, and when the motive appears upon the surface, it is presumably a specious pretence. The professional detective dives below it for sinister designs; turns the bull's eye of Diogenes's lantern into the complications of moral machinery for indications of dishonest purpose, the wheel within a wheel. In her natural philosophy there is no such thing as a simple mechanical power. It must come to pass that she will

invent motive and inner wheel rather than be disappointed in her quest.

A woman who may be twenty-five years of age, but who, in face and manner, might be nineteen, a limpid-eyed, velvet-voiced *ingénue*, laughed in my face last week when I firmly declined to believe that a man whom she professed to like, and whom I had thought good and honorable, was a masked *routé*.

"My dear madam," said the soft voice, "you always amuse me excessively. You are *so* refreshingly unsophisticated! My theory is that it is best to doubt whatever looks fair. Men are all alike, you know—and women, for that matter!" with a ripple of sweet laughter. "Only we dissemble more gracefully!"

I, who am old enough to be the married belle's mother, eyed her in dumb admiration as a perfect specimen of her kind. The sheen of her draperies, the brilliant eyes, the dreamy legato of her speech, the deliberate

delight of her regalement upon the thing she had tainted indicated beyond the shadow of misgiving the carrion fly (*Musca Cæsar*).*

Yet she is not a misanthrope in the usual acceptation of the word. She enjoys life, its bustle, variety, and chatter, and dearly loves her work. She gloats over a temptingly foul morsel of scandal with the tantalizing vivacity of the big blue abomination that buzzes patience and senses out of you on "muggy" August afternoons, and awakens within you fresh access of compassion for the much-bevapored Mariana in whose tortured ear,

"The blue fly sang i' the pane."

Nine chances out of ten our *Musca Cæsar* establishes to her own satisfaction some claims to the title of wit. The showiest fun at the lowest rates is to be had by turning the peculiarities and foibles of acquaintances into ridicule. A mimicking

* An allied species is the *Musca Vomitoria*.

grimace that would damage the self-respect of a dissolute monkey brings the performer into the admiring notice of a whole company when the tide of entertainment is at the ebb. He has raised a laugh and “showed up” a fellow-creature. Therefore the party is grateful, and repays the effort in applause as cheap as the wit that elicits it.

“Pshaw!” cries Lady Sneerwell in the “School for Scandal,”—“there’s no possibility of being witty without a little ill-nature. The malice of a good thing is the barb that makes it stick.”

How easily the accomplishment of mimicry is acquired, and its popularity, we see illustrated in the early success of Lady Teazle with Sir Benjamin Backbite’s clique. The country girl lately wedded by Sir Peter thus describes to her husband the “curious life” she led as “the daughter of a plain country squire”:

“My daily occupation was to inspect the dairy, superintend the poultry, make extracts

from the family receipt-book, and comb my Aunt Deborah's lap-dog. And then, you know my evening amusements! To draw patterns for ruffles which I had not materials to make up, to play Pope Joan with the curate ; to read a sermon to my aunt, or to be stuck down to an old spinet to strum my father to sleep after a fox-chase."

Into the emptiness of this life fall a rich husband and a career as beauty and wit, Lady Sneerwell's set supplying the latter.

"When I say an ill-natured thing, 'tis out of pure good humor," she protests.

Here is a sample of this sort of good humor :

"When she is neither speaking nor laughing (which very seldom happens), she never absolutely shuts her mouth, but leaves it always on a jar, as it were—thus: (*Shows her teeth*).

"I allow even that's better than the pains Mrs. Prim takes to conceal her losses in front. She draws her mouth till it positively

resembles the aperture of a poor's-box, and all her words appear to slide out edgewise, as it were—thus : ‘*How do you do, madam ? Yes, madam !*’” (*Mimics*).

This is coarse, but so is all scandal. From the very character of the entertainment refinement cannot be a constituent element. It costs less and goes further than any other social diversion, but it is a caviare to which “the general”—viz., the majority—decidedly incline.

Gossipry—to employ the term we like—is not, *per se*, scandal, nor is scandal necessarily slander. These sustain the same relation to false-witness-bearing that regular moderate-drinking does to confirmed inebriety. The most innocent “tippling” is a dangerous indulgence in an age when the taste for stimulants develops with terrible facility into passion.

I should stultify myself and insult your good sense were I to intimate that unfavorable criticism of acquaintances and comment

upon conduct is always unfriendly and ill-bred. There is a radical dissimilarity between fair adverse judgment temperately stated and abuse zestfully uttered. It is occasionally a duty to speak openly of faults that mar some characters we would fain admire. If you are constrained by your knowledge of these to withhold esteem, or shun associations approved by others, it may not be only proper, but in certain circumstances obligatory upon you, to state why you act thus. It is a duty to shield yourself from the imputation of causeless prejudice and to protect others from the risk of misplaced confidence. This, however—do not forget! —is duty and disagreeable; not pastime or pleasant. When you are conscious of a thrill of excitement that is not dread nerving you to the performance of the obligation, pause for severe examination of motives and spirit. Charitable Christians do not bring to such an *exposé* elation or even cheerful resignation.

So well understood is this principle, that the professional scandal-monger lards her piquant dishes with protestations of reluctance. Even those who listen and credit, smile slyly in recognizing preamble and peroration. She would not be unfair for a hemisphere nor unkind for the world. She calls heaven to witness to the purity of her intentions, angels and men to "overhaul" her heart and "make a note" of the unfeigned grief with which she industriously sows dragons' teeth in her neighbor's grounds. She would not act as unlicensed victualler of the region, hawking "high" meats from door to door, if the duty were not laid upon her by fate and strapped upon her groaning shoulders by conscience. The sight of such an one becomes microscopic with the practice of her profession. If furnished with a telescope she would instinctively reverse it to look through the bigger end. Her specialty and craze are for belittling and demeaning, not for broadening, never for elevating.

The cure of this plague of tongues in individuals and in communities begins, as do most effectual cures, at home. No better municipal regulation for cleansing thoroughfares has yet been enforced than the law requiring every dweller in Jerusalem to keep clean the street in front of his own door.

Set before you steadily a few leading facts and the deductions drawn from these and frame your conduct upon them, let your neighbors do as they will. First, that four fifths of the fault-finding and would-be setting-to-rights done in this life of ours is altogether gratuitous—in inception and execution a work of supererogation. “Nobody’s business” is best left undone when Everybody has his hands more than full of his own—or ought to have.

Next, that your time and powers are too costly to be wasted in the consideration of what your neighbors eat, drink, wear, say and do. In this sense, assuredly, you are not your brother’s or sister’s keeper. He who

can build wisely and well, desecrates his talents and squanders his strength when he sets about pulling down walls and sorting rubbish.

Thirdly, that all the intermeddling of the busiest gossips in town and country will not do the work you, in your proper and single personality, were sent into the world to perform, or release you from the responsibilities of that position. Your account is to be rendered to the Master, not to man.

“There are gods many, and lords many ; yet to us there is but One GOD, the Father, of whom are all things *and we unto Him.*”

It helps the soul perplexed by a multitude of officious counsels to look away from friend and foe, to this one infallible Refuge and Strength. Do your best as unto God, and leave the result to Him. This is the one invariable rule of life. Naught can absolve you from the sin of neglecting it. The peace that ensues upon obedience to it bears the spirit on eagles' wings into the sunshine that

abides continually above the clouds which press earthward.

Lastly, that, according to your view of time's value and brevity, the average term of human existence is not long enough in which to execute that which you ought, by now, to have made up your mind to do. It is a divine impatience that makes you intolerant of the loss of hours and breath in the discussion of "They-says"—the filing of the fine gold under careless or wanton hands. You do well to be angry at such prodigality of another's wealth.

To change the figure; if the gossip must make mince-meat—seasoned with the malice without which it would be insipid—of her neighbors' characters, teach her by firm but polite measures that you will lend neither tray, chopping-knife, nor condiments. You cannot repress her zeal in the prosecution of her trade. You *can* prevent her from using your clean rooms as shambles or kitchen.

Where varieties of the *Musca Cæsar*, or

her cousin, the *Musca Vomitoria*, do much abound, prudent housekeepers will put up "fly-doors," and keep their meats out of the way.

Judged by such reasoning and examples, tattling in its least harmful form sinks to its right place—that of a vulgar vice. For the truth of this statement I appeal confidently to your knowledge of the sense of self-degradation with which you recall, in the solitude of your chamber, the talk of an evening, during which the foibles and private histories of people, and not "the real things," have kept tongues busily at work and been the food of thought. You are disgusted at your own folly, vexed with those who have led you into dirty lanes and across bogs, instead of over sunny spaces and up to breezy heights. It is a yet graver question how often this experience may be repeated without blunting your moral and intellectual tastes; how soon toleration will be followed by perversion. Regard as a wholesome

symptom the shame that impels you to avoid looking in the detractor's face as the story of another's blemishes is rehearsed. Bashfulness in the hearing is virtue; awkwardness in replying is grace.

"'Tis safest in matrimony to begin with a little aversion," is a Malapropish bull. In gossipry it is safe and sensible to begin with a great deal for the subject, and sagacious to be on your guard against the retailer of the scandal.

The harpies tainted in touching their food. The slanderer who loves her craft has abundant internal evidence of her descent from a renowned and ancient, if somewhat disreputable, line. Being carnivorous and insatiable, you may not hope to escape her talons when your turn comes. It is not enough that you are confident in the sense of stainless rectitude. Fair and unpolluted flesh becomes a loathsome mass when she has had the handling of it, and the M. Cæsar brood bloat upon her leavings.

If my metaphors offend nice taste, please remember that the theme is one not suited to the employment of delicate epithets. The despicable filthiness of the thing cannot be exaggerated in the telling of it. I would, if I could, make the commerce in characters, mildly called "backbiting," as odious as that plied by the vilest of women ; would organize our girls into crusading leagues—total-abstinence bands for the suppression of this scourge of social circles and Christian churches. And why not? Whose hand wrote "*Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor*" upon the same tablet and in direct proximity with—

"*Thou shalt not kill,*

"*Thou shalt not commit adultery, and*

"*Thou shalt not steal*?"

Do I strain the truth in declaring that the slanderer is thief, panderer and assassin—an accursed trinity of death and woe? It is time that decent Christians and philanthropists awoke to the real nature of this sin. The

weight of public opinion, if not churchly discipline, should crush the traffickers in rumors that grow into lies with the passage from one lip to another.

“Repeat nothing that you do not yourself believe,” is a principle the practice of which would put an embargo upon three fourths of the infamous business. Should more stringent means be needed—“Give with the tale the name of the responsible author.” The enforcement of this brace of decrees would, in a month’s time, cause a precipitate and a settlement in the foul river that would leave the current clear.

I forewarn you that your avoidance of the disposition and habit you are so ready to contemn will be a thorny undertaking. Your talk of books and what they teach will be stigmatized as pedantic; the discussion of Nature and of Art as arrant affectation. Strangest of all, your defence of the assailed will be resented by the benevolent disciple of the Backbite school, who would not know-

ingly do injustice to her worst enemy—if she had one. Heaven knows that *she* hates nobody! You may be sure that your attempt at vindication of the slandered person, your civil endeavor to correct a “misunderstanding, natural perhaps, but deplorable,” will be ascribed to the least commendable motive her invention is capable of supplying. More could hardly be said for the ingenuity of malignity *pur et simple*. I have but to append that you must take your choice of the two evils.

No! “Culture” of the mind and taste is *not* a cure for gossip in its milder features, or even for coarser and downright scandal. If it were, this chapter would never have been penned. Nor is it true that one who has clean hands and a pure heart can defy the Sneerwells and Snakes of the politest society in the most refined city of the most virtuous commonwealth of our Union.

I pass several times a week through a fashionable quarter of a handsome town, and

by an elegant house, the residence of an amiable and opulent gentleman. At a certain window of this mansion Mrs. Arachne Webb sits behind a cleverly adjusted blind for hours of the daylight and the darkness. She is not old, nor yet silly. In her youth she was a belle, and still "makes up" well in the evening. She has all that wealth and social standing and an indulgent husband can give her. The world has treated her well from her cradle. What moves her to watch, in her lace-draped corner, for the passage of possible victims of fang and line? Heaven has been propitious to her, and even bitter fruits sweeten with sunshine. Yet she is ready to cry out in a rage of disappointment, of days in which fly-trapping has been dull, and of evening watches when no senseless moths have been abroad :

" Let that day be darkness, neither let the light shine upon it. As for that night, let darkness seize upon it."

Diligence in business has wrought as a

sequel fervor of spirit. This is the rational answer to the oft-repeated query—" *Why* should So-and-So care to rend the reputation of Such-an-One who has done her no harm? No act is motiveless."

Neither are our gossip's daily works and ways. By degrees, she has learned the love of work for work's sake. Spying, tattling, and detraction are the object of her life. She hunts her preserves with the keen nose and ardent temper of your pointer when you take him afield. Scentless stubble is her aversion.

Covert as is her watch, and her presence betrayed to the passer-by only in the accidental stir of a curtain, or the flash of the diamonds on the finger inserted to widen the peep-hole between the blinds, Mrs. Arachne Webb's post and occupation are as much a matter of general understanding as was the existent fact of the garment, allusion to which made Mrs. Wilfer blush for pert Lavvy, and elicited Mr. George Sampson's agreeable

smile, and—"After all, ma'am, we know it's there!"

Everybody in town knows that Mrs. Arachne is "there." Saucy youths, in passing her door, hum, *sotto voce*—

"‘ Will you walk into my parlor ?’
Said the spider to the fly.”

Filmy threads of her spinning tangle in our eyelashes, tickle our noses ; even trip up the unwary and the weak.

“ She is a dangerous woman !” we say, warningly, to our young people. “ Be careful what you say to her.”

Yet we all smile upon her in society, and call upon her at decorous intervals. Not quite certain whether she is more dangerous as foe or as friend, we feel intuitively that it is safer not to offend her. She is in delicate health—so she gives out—suffering excruciatingly at times from enlargement of the spleen. Whereat nobody marvels and some smile bitterly in their sleeves. In company,

she affects sofa-corners and shadowy, cosey nooks, "not being strong"—say those who know no better. Those who do, shun the gleaming eyes of the still figure, and give the be-webbed retreat a wide berth. For she spins most cunningly in such circumstances. Butterflies on diaphanous wings float before her by the dozen, giddy grasshoppers and droning bees, and she selects her prey at her leisure.

"But," reason the incredulous, "a scandal-monger so notorious can do no harm. Who, among sensible people, will believe her tales?"

Sensible Christians, by the score, do receive them in full faith. Some pass them on without other contradiction than by attaching her name. Some, for the mere love of sensation, omit this precaution. The scandal that comes smartly to the jaded palate of the epicure in gossipry is generally accepted without demur.

"I don't believe it, you know," thus the accomplice drugs conscience. "But it is

such a rich tid-bit that I cannot keep it to myself."

The next repetition will be without the qualifying clause.

There is at once virile and conceptive power in scandal. Nothing but the expulsive force of will and conscience can rid the mind of it.

The Psalmist prescribed heroic treatment in his day :

"Whoso privily slandereth his neighbor will I cut off!"

"What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue?

"Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper!"

That is—excision and the moxa.



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INTRODUCTION.

WHEN, almost two years ago, I was importuned to write a series of popular articles upon the "Physical and Mental Education of Woman," I re-read carefully Dr. Clarke's "Sex in Education" and said in effect if not in words, "They have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them."

Still, the proposition had awakened my attention to the real or imaginary need for such a work. It was one from which my taste recoiled, nor had I—it was easy to persuade myself—time or strength for the undertaking. But, once admitted, the thought would not down. Once opened, my eyes saw more and farther than ever before into the needs, the failures, and the capabilities of my sex.

I saw a mighty class of human beings ignorant of the things pertaining to their physical peace; accounting the holiest mysteries of their natures an unclean thing; holding carelessly the sublimest possibilities of their kind; never giving a thought to the awful truth that they control the fate of the coming race.

I saw Man—owning Woman as his mate with but one, and that the least noble side of his dual nature;—the conscious oppression of her by the coarse and sensual, the repression of her intellectual strivings by the arrogant who brook not even the shadow of a partner on the throne of Self. With pain and surprise I saw the unconscious tyranny of the refined and chivalrous. The velvet glove needs no iron hand within to keep Woman—the flattered Angel of Home and Queen of Hearts—in her place. To the boor, she is a kitchen pipkin, valued according to the amount of hard usage she will endure, the quantity of work to be gotten out of her. To the boor's superior in sense and breeding, she is delicate faïence, to be treasured in a windowed cabinet, very precious, very expensive, and, for the practical business of life, very useless.

I saw that the influence of traditions—some mouldy and unsavory, others sweet as the breath from the Indian jars our grandmothers kept filled with spiced rose-leaves,—held all these wrongs to their work. Public sentiment has decreed what shall be whispered in secret, and what proclaimed from the market-tower. Old-wives' fables and prejudices outrank with the majority of women the testimony of enlightened physiologists. The girl walks blindfolded between plowshares,

hotter and closer together than Queen Emma's, and can hardly—unless by a miracle of mercy—fail to sear her tender feet.

Yet, brave men and braver women had already spoken. It was meet that these latter should be heard. Women can say things to women which we would not bear from men—things which men do not *know*. There is with us a Guild of Sentiment with which a stranger may not intermeddle, as there is a Guild of Suffering known in its fullness of bitterness only to the initiated. The drawback to a woman's advocacy of any cause is that her idealistic, sympathetic, *maternal* nature makes her a partisan. Her subject becomes her bantling. She is restive in argument. Her "*can't you see it?*" anticipates logical deduction. Woman is an instinctive diognosian. Man is patient and systematic in following the clue leading to the source of a malady, and in adopting the successive stages that promise cure. He, in his turn, is irritated by the in consequence of readers of the other sex; tenacious of technicalities dear to the scientific soul, and loses strength of style when he tries to simplify his treatise to their comprehension.

I have not the vanity to believe that I can convince the educated reason which Clarke and Greg, Napheys and Mitchell, Frances Power Cobbe and Mary Putnam Jacobi have not moved.

And yet, my book is written! After the first page I could not stay heart or pen. I send it forth to homes where other "Familiar Talks" from the same source have found, first indulgent, then loving auditors. I have aimed to avoid abstruseness on one hand, and baldness on the other. I hope there is not a sentence which mother and daughter may not read together. I know there is not a line which has not been dictated by a sincere desire to be helpful to both.

MARION HARLAND.

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